

July 31, 1982  
Daniel Ellsberg  
90 Norwood Avenue  
Kensington, CA 94707

"FREEZE DAY"--A NATIONAL MORATORIUM, OCTOBER 15, 1982

Proposal: A National Moratorium suspending business-as-usual in cities and campuses across the country on one working day-- Friday, October 15, 1982 (the anniversary of the 1969 Vietnam Moratorium)--with nationwide rallies and other political activities demanding that the United States "Freeze and Reverse the Arms Race, Fund Human Needs." In particular, citizens taking time off from school or work would assemble to demand that the President immediately propose to the Soviets a nuclear freeze: a bilateral permanent halt to the testing, production, and deployment of all new nuclear warheads and vehicles.

Points in Favor of Freeze Day:

1. It would complement and support the referenda to be held on Election Day in 10 states and many cities. It would give people in regions where referenda are not scheduled a chance to be seen and counted, and to express solidarity with the voters in the referendum states, while making voters in those states aware that there is truly a large national movement for them to join, not just a local phenomenon.
2. It would assure "free" media coverage for the issue, just two weeks before the voting--not only local coverage, but national media attention given the "national" context of the simultaneous rallies.
3. It would give the movement a timely sense of progress beyond the big rallies of June 12. It would be different, and "more," in several ways: (a) it would be unmistakably a national demonstration; (b) the overall numbers participating would be even larger than June's, counting nationwide (whereas no future rally in a single city, even New York or Washington, can go beyond June 12 in numbers); (c) it could not be dismissed as "Californians" or "New Yorkers"; it would be taking place in, and demonstrating supporters in, all of "Middle America" between the two coasts; (d) the demonstrations would be held on a weekday (thus giving the event the tacit character of a general strike.)

The last point is on the model of the Moratorium Day observances on October 15, 1969; it gives people the sense that they are doing something a degree more committed and impressive than attending a rally on their day off; it encourages them to announce their position to their bosses and co-workers and even to persuade them to come; it may well result (as in 1969) in many businesses and schools giving time off, swelling the ranks and adding strongly to the expression of popular support. (If rallies start at noon, many people can just devote their lunch hour, while others take off the whole afternoon or day.) The experience in 1969 indicates that these effects, combined with the national character of the event, strongly outweigh in impressiveness the fact that some people who would come on a Saturday or Sunday will not take time off from work.

4. Some speakers might wish to go beyond the Freeze proposal: e.g. calling for an immediate bilateral moratorium on testing, production, and deployment. But the posters, slogans, and theme should focus on the Freeze, so as not to confuse voters or undercut efforts to succeed with the referenda.

5. Congresspersons who support the Freeze would be asked to speak at the rallies. This foreseeable benefit just two weeks before the election would be a very strong incentive for waverers to announce their support in advance. Congresspersons--and candidates--who oppose the Freeze or have not announced their support would be identified at the rally. Possibly an additional part of the day's activities--and the subsequent two weeks--could involve visitations of the opposing candidates in their home offices, and perhaps picketing.

6. These rallies would take place precisely when Congresspersons are campaigning in their home states. They will be directly exposed to the rallies and local media coverage.

7. The most likely counterattack to the Freeze referenda is a media blitz during the two weeks preceding the election. Given the movement's difficulty in raising comparable funds to buy TV time, rallies like this (whose local media coverage would be greatly enhanced by the national character of the day and the large nation-wide attendance figures) would seem to be the best possible counter to this anti-Freeze publicity, enlarging and committing the Freeze supporters, uniting them for the following two weeks. The expected opposing arguments of the referenda could be rebutted in advance at the rallies. Some potential spokespersons against the Freeze would be discouraged by the great show of national support for the Freeze. And the specific argument that the Freeze is a Russian proposal--and the movement a tool of Moscow--would be refuted most effectively, not by argument, but by "demonstrating" prior to the election the breadth and character of support. Measures of this support would be not only the numbers, but also the widespread geographical participation and the quality of the speakers (many of whom will probably be more "establishment/moderate/authoritative" than is usual in antiwar movements), and in the range of people attending.

8. For maximum participation, everyone supporting the Freeze--whether or not they can attend a rally--would be asked to wear their support on their sleeve, in the form of an armband (perhaps white this time.)

9. Conceivably, the rallies could be an occasion for significant fundraising--for pre-election media coverage on the issue, and for or against specific candidates based on their stance on this issue. In any case, the event should enhance last-minute fundraising efforts.

10. The simple identification of candidates who are for and against the Freeze could have an effect on the last two weeks of the campaign, and on the election results. And the national attention focused on the issue at that time would enhance public perception of the Freeze and disarmament as major election issues which are in fact influencing voters.

11. The Union of Concerned Scientists is reportedly considering sponsoring another national day of teach-ins on campuses, like those of last November. They might be persuaded to coordinate these with the October 15 National Moratorium, say the day before. Likewise, some European actions might be coordinated to make the Freeze Day an international event. (There is already a proposal circulating for schoolchildren around the world to observe a period of silence on October 15.)

12. The timing of this event would almost certainly produce speakers of impressive caliber, as on October 15, 1969--not only politicians, but also others who have not previously spoken out on the subject. (This could help undercut and even abort much of the anticipated last-minute media counterattack by opponents.) This would not only swell the crowds at the rallies, but would also increase the commitment of these figures themselves and would strengthen the public's impression of the movement as a national consensus that cuts across party, age, sex, and class categorization. (With a special effort to involve blacks and browns as speakers and entertainers, and with effective outreach to their neighborhoods, churches, and other organizations, it could be demonstrated that this issue cuts across race as well.)

13. Although relatively little time is available to coordinate such a massive event, the organizing of the last two years, and especially the groundswell of support which has built in the past six months, should make "Freeze Day" feasible at this time. Obviously, both funding and workers will be the key problems, with most resources now fully committed for the fall to efforts for the referenda and the elections. (Suggestions and initiatives on funding and networks of activists would be the most welcome response to this draft proposal!) However, this new project is conceived not as a rival to ongoing efforts, but as totally complementary and supportive to them. Although it will clearly call for extra resources, is there really much that can be done--to counter opposition television, to turn out voters both for the Freeze referenda and (more widely) for candidates favoring the Freeze--that promises to be more effective than this? (The rallies themselves should produce a surge of volunteers for the efforts of the next two weeks and for Election Day.)

14. With the theme, "Freeze and Reverse the Arms Race, Fund Human Needs," grassroots constituencies of all those penalized by Reagan's arms spending and the resulting inflation and unemployment--the majority of American citizens--should welcome the opportunity by October 15 to join a dramatic, nationwide expression of protest that links these aspects of the Reagan Administration's policies.

## IT WORKED IN '69!

Although very few outside the <sup>Nixon</sup> White House knew it at the time (or even today), the October 15 demonstrations aborted the Nixon Administration's planning for an escalation of the war in Vietnam just two weeks later. Starting in August 1969, Nixon had repeatedly warned the North Vietnamese, through Henry Kissenger and in secrecy from the American public, that they would be attacked more heavily than ever before--("A savage blow," Kissenger instructed his planners)--if they did not accept the terms amounting to their defeat by November 1, 1969. The threat included the possible use of nuclear weapons against targets in North Vietnam (revealed by Haldeman's memoirs, p. 83, and confirmed by Vietnamese who received the threats, and by Roger Morris, Kissenger's assistant, who reviewed planning folders for the specific nuclear targets selected, one of which was a mile and a half from the Chinese border.) *See Hush*

Hanoi did not accept the terms dictated, then or later. Nixon gives one and only one reason in his memoirs (p. 402) why he did not then carry out what he calls "my November ultimatum." There were too many Americans in the streets and squares--1 to 2 million nationwide--taking off from work and school to protest the war on October 15. "I knew," Nixon says, "that after all the protests and the Moratorium, American public opinion would be seriously divided by any military escalation of the war." So destroying the dikes, using B-52's against Haiphong and Hanoi, invading Cambodia and Laos--all part of the plans completed in October, along with possible invasion of North Vietnam and combat use of nuclear weapons--had to be postponed, the last two permanently.

Many students still remember wearing a black armband or marching with their parents or older friends that fall of 1969, when they were seven years old or so. They were doing the same job their parents were doing on that occasion: being counted by the President, in opposition to his secret threats and plans. By departing from school-or-business-as-usual, children as well as adults were compelling him to maintain the existing moratorium, since Nagasaki, on the <sup>combat</sup> use of nuclear weapons against humans. They were buying time for humanity--another dozen years so far. We can thank them for what they did that day by doing it again.